

Small Business Advocacy Council

Draft Meeting minutes—May 22, 2009

Attendees: Ted Almon, Steve Bartlett, Robert Boiselle, Kelly Carello, Sherri Carrera, Mike Clarkin, John Cronin, Barbara Cullen, Mark Deion, Arthur Dwyer, Sidney Goldman, Ed Greene, Conni Harding, Mark Hayward, Bob Lafond, Jo Lee, David Lucier, Ed Mazze, Dennis McCarthy, Laura McNamara, Jerry Meyer, Don Nokes, Phil Papoojian, Elizabeth Perry, Janet Raymond, Miriam Ross, Christine Smith, Caroline Wells, Bill Vernon

Lt. Governor Roberts called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. and welcomed the members of the Small Business Advocacy Council (SBAC) and guests.

Lt. Governor Roberts asked for approval of the meeting minutes for the last SBAC meeting that were circulated electronically and in hard copy at the meeting. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Lt. Governor Roberts stated that the focus of the meeting would be legislation pending before the General Assembly. Lt. Governor Roberts indicated that the state budget was clearly dominating the legislative session but there were other substantive small businesses

issues also pending before the General Assembly as well.

Lt. Governor Roberts gave an update of the “Health Hub” legislation that she had requested this year. The current version of the legislation was intentionally stalled pending the imminent announcement of federal healthcare reform legislation. Lt. Governor Roberts indicated that it would be very wise to make sure that any state reform was consistent with pending national reforms.

Ted Almon reiterated his support for a single payer system that would accumulate all the dollars in one place and force the kind of changes to the delivery system that he feels are necessary to control costs.

Phil Papoojian congratulated the Lt. Governor for her legislation and stated that the Rhode Island Business Group on Health was focused on both legislative reform and watching for proposed health insurance rate hikes.

Lt. Governor Roberts introduced Matt Auten, Senior Policy Analyst to the Lt. Governor to provide an update on legislation dealing with Buy Local RI, the Green Economy and Tax Policy.

Matt Auten talked about several Buy Local bills that had been introduced and compared the bills by categorizing them into those that would provide a percentage advantage to in-state companies,

those that would require an in-state company to be selected if all other factors were “equal,” those that would create a small business set-aside and those that would create a “reciprocal” preference. The group had a preference for those bills that would provide an advantage for in-state companies without triggering federal penalties or retaliation from other states.

Matt Auten stated that there were numerous Green Economy bill introduced this legislative session including bills that would facilitate small-scale solar projects, promote green buildings and large-scale projects like wind farms.

Matt Auten brought up the issue of tax policy and provided a slide with legislation that would dealing with: flat tax, sales tax, estate tax, capital gains tax, personal income tax, corporate tax, combined tax reporting and elimination of tax credits. Matt stated that these issues would likely be resolved in the state budget.

Ed Mazze spoke about the importance of being regionally competitive with neighboring states.

Janet Raymond stated that the Providence Chamber was most worried about maintaining the flat tax and was focusing its lobbying efforts on that issue. She mentioned that over twenty legislators have signed a letter asking that the flat tax be frozen.

Phil Papoojian said that the Smaller Business Association of New England (SBANE) was also focusing on the flat tax.

Lt. Governor Roberts thanked the SBAC members and meeting attendees and adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.